



### A97 Is FEPAC Accreditation Opening the Employment Door?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will: learn about the relationship between FEPAC accredited program graduates and the hiring practices of some ASCLD-LAB accredited forensic laboratories; will learn that most laboratory directors know of FEPAC but do not consider it an advantage in the hiring process; and will learn that AAFS and FEPAC need to market the goals and significance of FEPAC accreditation to forensic laboratories.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by presenting data that shows that FEPAC accreditation is not an advantage in the hiring process for accredited program graduates. Therefore, is it worthwhile for post-secondary educational institutions with forensic science degree programs?

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) developed the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC) in 2002. FEPAC accredits forensic science programs located in regionally accredited universities, including undergraduate and graduate degrees, and as a result it is hoped that it encourages academic quality through the accreditation. Seventy-six randomly selected forensic laboratories from across the United States were chosen for the telephone survey from a list of American Society of Crime Lab Directors

Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD-LAB) accredited forensic laboratories. Data collection was performed by contacting these accredited laboratories by telephone and conducting a phone survey of three to four survey questions. The questions asked:

1. Are you involved in the hiring process?
2. What is your title or position in the lab?
3. Have you heard of FEPAC accreditation?
4. Do your potential new hires receive any advantage in the hiring process if they have graduated from a FEPAC accredited program? What is it?

Overall, a total response rate of 42% was obtained for the telephone survey, generating 32 completed surveys from participating laboratories for qualitative data analysis. Of these participating forensic laboratories, 72% had heard of FEPAC education accreditation and of significance, 69% of these forensic laboratories believed that graduation from a FEPAC accredited program did not confer any type of advantage during the hiring process. When an actual forensic laboratory employee, including the head of the laboratory, was surveyed, the results showed that greater than 70% of the respondents had knowledge of FEPAC. However, when human resources personnel for the laboratory or appropriate administrative agency were contacted, the results showed only 25% even knew of FEPAC accreditation. When interviewing the head of the forensic laboratory, 40% of those individuals who were aware of FEPAC accreditation, stated a belief that the accreditation status should give an advantage during hiring. However, no human resources members believed in this advantage. Based on this project's data and interpretations, in today's job market, successful completion and graduation from a FEPAC accredited program does not confer a specific advantage during the hiring process. The cause for these results as shown by this project appears to be due to a lack of knowledge about the requirements of FEPAC accreditation, as well as, general knowledge as to the number and location of current FEPAC accredited programs. Although knowledge of FEPAC accreditation within the forensic science educational population is growing, the corresponding growth within the general forensic science community has yet to be seen. This presentation will suggest solutions to change the perception of FEPAC accredited programs. The American Academy of Forensic Sciences and the FEPAC committee itself needs to focus more on "marketing" of the goals, process, requirements, and standards necessary for FEPAC accreditation. If the marketing is successful, then the value for FEPAC accreditation will be shown in the form of an outcome that will give hiring advantages to graduates of FEPAC accredited programs. Certainly, the advantages they deserve in today's job market.

#### **FEPAC Accreditation, Employment, Hiring Process Advantage**